



## **LODGE VEGAS # 32**

### Obligations

Obligations are a part of life, as Freemasons we have all taken them while kneeling at our altars and are well attentive of those ones contained in our bylaws. But not all of our obligations are printed on a page, or are in any ritual book, nor are they even whispered into our ear. But they are absolute, they are undeniable and inalienable.

We say the chair chooses the man. Those men who are selected will arise to the opportunity and fulfill the responsibilities that come with the chairs of leadership. That is what we insist of these men, no language is considered necessary to convey to him the responsibilities and obligations of leadership. The adverse effects upon the Craft if these obligations are not met can be sweeping, and the consequences of not meeting the expectations of the chair, for any man, should be understandable. When we come across an officer that is not living up to his obligations it is our duty to place in his stead a Brother who will live up to his obligations and our expectations, our actions need always be for the greater good of the Craft.

As caretakers, our unwritten and unspoken obligations are those to our Brothers who preceded us, who gave us the inheritance and legacy of our Brotherhood; to the Brothers that have yet to be born who we will one day bequeath the Brotherhood to. Together, as leaders and quarryman alike we are obligated to identify and address the concerns that suffer the Fraternity during our tenure, to do our unadulterated best to preserve the wellbeing of our Craft and pass on this living and breathing organization to our children.

It's no secret that our Fraternity is on the horns of some beastly matters that shake us to the core, and outwardly refuses to free us. The most voiced and distressing for nearly all is the crisis of membership, or more to the point, the lack there of. Query nearly any Mason today and he will tell you that our members are dying off quicker than we are Initiating them. Our numbers diminish daily, unremorsefully marching downward. In spite of our best labors of one day classes, ads, articles, and countless publicity photos the hemorrhage has not been stopped, the bandage is not restraining, the wound isn't closing. The insidious explanation, the recruitment problem is simply not true, it is a phantom carrot on a stick, and shockingly the Grand Lodges have known this all along.

It has quietly been known, to the small percentage of our leadership, that recruitment is not our problem, retention is. That we loose more men to demits and suspension for non payment of dues than we do to mortality. Even worse, the tenure of those men that abandon us through demits and NPR does so only after two years of sitting amongst us.

The indictment is serous; to consciously ignore a critical problem and to distract our time, energy, and resources to areas that will have no impact on the predicament!

How are we aware that our leadership knows about this very real issue? In several ways, but the two most obvious and public are the report commissioned by the Conference of Grand Masters from the Masonic Information Center, 'It's about time'. Among its findings this report states, in very basic black and white certainty that retention is an issue we continue to ignore, it is the issue we have to deal with and find solutions for.

A further way this matter is recognized is by the yearly Proceeding reports printed each year by Grand Lodges, which expresses the statistics and ways men are leaving the Fraternity in its respective jurisdiction. It is a hard accusation to deny when the Grand Lodges themselves have gathered and published the data.

It's unquestionable, our Grand Lodges know what the true tribulations are, issues that have a very direct relevance on the physical condition and outlook of this organization, as well as our obligations to our past and future Brothers. But they continue to consciously shove the schema of recruitment, and still manage their publicity campaigns and one day classes. Wasting resources we can not replace, failing the obligations we care take for our Brothers, navigating our vessel into unsheltered waters.

The question is beseeched, why then if our leadership knows of our trouble are all these resources of time, energy, and money sidetracked towards finding new members instead of retention? The answer to this inquiry is not so public or observable.

Possibly it's because some believe we need to disassociate ourselves from any of those occultish roots that some told we have. Perhaps it's that the Shrine is seen as a success. After watching decades of men using the Craft Lodges as nothing more than a stepping stones to the Shrine, where these men spent all their time and resources, it is thought that it would be best to model the Craft Lodges in its likeness. Perchance it could be we no longer produce leaders but politicians, who instead of doing what's right and best for the Fraternity, make their decisions on what's expediently needed to proceed to the next chair and apron. Any reason, bluntly, seems unacceptable.

We are no longer privileged enough to have leaders such as Truman or Roosevelt, men that not only influenced the Craft but the twentieth century as well. Men who led by example, men who made judgments and charted paths that may not have been well-liked, but were done for the greater good. They not only persuaded us in the present through historical perspective that their actions were proper, but they swayed their contemporaries in the past with their written and spoken words

which mapped the way. Today we have leaders that don't sway their detractors by rhetoric or example but by censorship, suspension, or expulsion.

We choose our leaders because we require them to live up to their obligations, we elect them to do what's right for the Fraternity, we expect them to do what is right, period. Not to perilously ignore the reefs so they may pilot our vessel on their personal voyage of discovery.

We have been burdened with men who cannot lead for the common good; they deny making the tough decisions needed to take our elite organization into the future. We can only pray that we have not sailed too far on this course of devastation. Perhaps we in the quarries are partially culpable. We have sat too silently and not expressed our thoughts. The moment has come for the muse from the quarry to be heard, for our leaders to live up to their obligations.

It's time we stopped walking aimlessly, reaching for a carrot that simply isn't there. The point has come for men to choose their role and to be counted, to take the responsibility for fulfilling our obligations to our Brothers throughout time and space. We must find men willing to be part of the solution, instead of part of a political machine that is endeavoring to keep the old boys network intact. We need leaders that will address the issues instead of using them for self aggrandizing and gain. We can no longer afford to be mute, reality is a harsh mistress and the cost of doing nothing will be a grave with no marker.

But when a long Train of Abuses and Usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object ... it is their Right, it is their Duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security.

- Source: Knights of the North Masonic Dictionary

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